

Watauga History

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clerks and their term of service he starts at 1850, it is interesting to note that from that date until about 1860 the Rev. Joseph Harrison served and was succeeded in that office by the Rev. D. C. Harmon. It is probable that the standard of literacy of that time was limited and that the clergy's scholarship qualified them for the office. Incidentally, this is the only record of clergy in public office in the history of Watauga county. Under the heading of Baptist Church History in Watauga County, Arthur tells us "The Rev. Joseph Harrison was repeatedly elected register of deeds of Watauga county, but during the Civil War he remained loyal to the Union, refusing to take the oath of allegiance to the Confederacy, with the result that Rev. D. C. Harmon served during that time." Of the Rev. Mr. Harman or Harmon nothing is recorded which gives us a clue to his denomination or the proper spelling of his name.

Nor was the Rev. Mr. Harrison alone in his loyal allegiance to the Union cause. While Boone was solidly Confederate in its sympathies, many of the outlying families of the county remembered their Yankee ancestry and refused to take part in the War Between the States. In this connection, Shepherd M. Dugger, famous as the author of "Balsam Groves of Grandfather Mountain" and "War Trails of the Blue Ridge" states that while his father was employed at the Confederate forge at Cranberry during the war his father's sympathies were definitely Unionist. Mr. Dugger tells stirring tales of feeding "outliers," "bushwhackers" and "recruiters," as he designates Union participants in the guerrilla warfare which left a legend of wild disunion in homes and families throughout this mountain country.

Only one major action of the Civil War affected Watauga county—Stoneman's raid. This raiding party, consisting of a cavalry division and a battery of artillery from the Union forces at Knoxville, under the command of Major General George Stoneman, reached Boone on the forenoon of March 28, 1865. Confederate sympathizers fired on the head of the Union column and in the resulting skirmish three residents of Boone were killed and five wounded. Arthur remarks that, "Following the firing Stoneman's men charged and those who had fired upon them took off toward Howard's Knob and with the exception of one all of the wounded were shot in the rear." Local tradition credits Stoneman's command with much unnecessary brutality.

Following the raid upon Boone Stoneman's command divided and continued on to harry the foothills of the mountains of western North Carolina. This was the highlight of the Civil War so far as Watauga county was concerned.

Through the years Watauga county's public officials have been men of an unusually high type.

Able Officials

After careful research the most complete record of the officeholders, both elective and appointive, has been compiled and concludes this historical narrative. It is significant that the officials of Watauga county have never been smirched with scandal nor involved in any of the political scandals and feuds of their period. This listing of county officials starts at the period of 1878, a few years after the burning of the courthouse and includes the present county officials:

Representatives

Wm. B. Council, 1878; Thomas Bingham, 1880-1882-1886-1896; Edward F. Lovill 1884-1892; Jesse A. Crisp, 1888; Jordan B. Phillips, 1890; Lindsay H. Michael, 1894; Wm. B. Council, Jr., 1898; W. H. Calloway, 1900; L. H. Michael, 1902; Dr. Phipps, 1904; W. D. Farthing, 1906; Smith Hagaman, 1908-1910; John W. Hodges, 1912; A. W. Smith, 1914; Blaine Coffey, 1916-1920-1922; H. T. H. Coffey, 1926; R. C. Rivers, 1928; R. T. Greer, 1930-1932; Dean Swift, 1934; W. F. Miller, 1936.

Clerk Superior Court

J. H. Hardin, 1878; Joe B. Todd, 1884-1890; M. B. Blackburn, 1894; John H. Bingham, 1898; Thos. Bingham, 1902-1906; W. D. Farthing, 1910-1914; O. L. Coffey, 1918; A. W. Smith, 1920-1922; A. E. South, 1926-1930-1936.

Register of Deeds

W. W. Prensell, 1878-1880-1882-1884; E. J. Blackburn, 1886; M. B. Blackburn, 1888-1890; Calvin J. Cottrell, 1892; John W. Hodges, 1894-1896; J. M. May, 1898-1900-1902-1904-1906; W. R. Gragg, 1908-1910-1912-1914-1916-1918; E. M. Harmon, 1920-1922; Pearl Hartley, 1924-1926; Helen Underdown, 1928-1930-1932-1934-1936.

FIRST MAYOR OF BOONE



The late W. L. Bryan, Esq., who was the first mayor of Boone and pioneer merchant and hotel man of the community.

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and the mountain community. Either in their official capacity or as private citizens they devoted much time to urging road improvements, closer co-operation with state agencies looking toward expansion of the community's opportunities either in trade or cultural advantage.

From the beginning, D. B. Dougherty and Ed. D. Dougherty had the cooperation of the town officials in creating city conditions favorable to the growth of the school which has now become Appalachian State Teachers College. D. B. Dougherty, second editor of the Watauga Democrat, and father of the founders of Appalachian College, served as mayor of Boone in 1901, taking office on May 9. Later, I. G. Greer, a noted educator and professor at Appalachian College and now superintendent of the Baptist orphanage, the Mills Home, served as one of the town commissioners in 1919.

It is interesting to note that W. L. Bryan, the first mayor, by charter appointment, had the confidence of the town to such a remarkable degree that he served intermittently as mayor for 25 years. Col. J. B. Todd, well known attorney and intimate friend of Mayor Bryan, as well as one of the first commissioners for the town by charter appointment, served two terms in the state legislature during this same period, and did much to foster the growth of Boone in that body. It is through the cooperation of W. G. Todd, son of Colonel Todd, that the records of this earlier period are available. Except for such memories almost the only extant records of the town's corporate life are contained in the now yellowing files of the Watauga Democrat.

The founder and first editor of the Watauga Democrat, J. F. Spainhour, served as a commissioner in 1890 and 1891. Now living at Morganton, Mr. Spainhour was a distinguished attorney of his period and served as state's attorney for this district.

In 1890, W. C. Coffey, then a leading merchant of Boone, was elected to the office of mayor. Besides Mr.



Owen Wilson, manager of Smithey's store here.

Spainhour, the other commissioners that year were W. L. Bryan, the first mayor, and R. C. Rivers, for 44 years, publisher of the Watauga Democrat. Mr. Rivers served in 1891, 1897, 1899 and 1911 as well. In connection with Mr. Rivers' service it is interesting to note that the Dr. J. G. Rivers appointed by charter as one of the first town commissioners, was the father of the late publisher.

In addition to Mr. Spainhour and Mr. Rivers, I. W. Thomas served as one of the city commissioners in 1891.

On May 11, 1892, a new city cabinet took office with J. B. Council in the mayor's chair. Mr. Council was a worker in metal and a builder and had been a leading citizen of Boone for years, serving several terms as postmaster. The town commissioners for this year were Dr. L. C. Reeves, a well known physician; M. B. Blackburn, merchant and hotel proprietor, and E. S. Coffey, an attorney.

No record exists of the town officials elected in 1895 to serve until 1897, but for that latter year J. C. Fletcher, an attorney, was elected mayor. The town commissioners were E. S. Coffey, M. B. Blackburn and R. C. Rivers.

W. L. Bryan, first mayor of Boone, again took office on May 4, 1899, and the city commissioners for that year were R. C. Rivers, J. M. Moretz and T. F. Coffey. In 1901, the year in which D. B. Dougherty took office as mayor, the town commissioners elected were E. S. Coffey, J. C. Fletcher and M. B. Blackburn.

Again there is a hiatus in the record, this time for the years from 1903 to 1907. Every effort has been made to bridge these gaps in the town's history unsuccessfully. J. C. Fletcher took office as mayor on May 10, 1907, and the commissioners elected to serve with him were M. B. Blackburn, L. B. McNeill, a farmer and merchant, and M. P. Cletcher, a hotelman of the period.

Again in 1909, on May 6, W. L. Bryan took over the duties of mayor of Boone. His commissioners for the term of two years were Adolphus L. Cook, M. P. Critcher and L. L. Critcher.

Mayor Bryan yielded office in 1911 to W. E. Gragg, whose commissioners were D. J. Cottrell, R. C. Rivers and John W. Hodges, who served for a time as sheriff of Watauga county.

For the year 1913 there is no record extant of the city fathers, but on May 6, 1915, J. M. Moretz took over

POSTMASTER



Wiley G. Hartzog, postmaster at Boone, who has recently been appointed for a second term.

the duties of mayor. F. A. Linney, attorney; M. B. Blackburn and D. J. Cottrell were commissioners for this term.

Again in 1917 the record is missing. T. B. Moore, a printer, was elected mayor in 1919 and took office on May 8. His commissioners were F. A. Linney, M. B. Blackburn and I. G. Greer.

In 1921, on May 5, T. B. Moore was again inaugurated as mayor of Boone. A. E. South, now clerk of the court; J. F. Moore and D. J. Cottrell served during the following two years on the city commission.

E. N. Hahn, now justice of the peace, took over the duties of mayor on May 10, 1923. Dr. McG. Anders, now resident in Gastonia, J. F.

Moore and T. B. Moore served as city commissioners during Mayor Hahn's administration.

Mayor Hahn was succeeded in office by D. J. Cottrell, who took office on May 7, 1925. Dr. J. M. Hodges, A. Y. Howell, now state probation officer, and L. L. Bingham, city mail carrier, were members of the city commission during this term.

On May 5, 1927, W. R. Gragg was again inducted as mayor. A. Y. Howell, T. B. Moore and Clyde R. Greene, of the Farmers Hardware Company, were elected as city commissioners.

R. S. Swift succeeded to the mayoralty on May 9, 1929. That year Dean J. D. Rankin, of Appalachian College, Dr. H. B. Perry and L. L. Bingham were elected to serve for two years as city commissioners.

J. M. Moretz, who had served as mayor in 1915, was returned to that office in 1931, taking office on May 7. His commissioners for the next two years were R. L. Clay, now deputy collector of internal revenue for this district; W. Frank Miller, who served as assemblyman at the time of his death, and Dr. H. B. Perry.

J. Frank Moore was elected mayor in 1933, taking office on May 4. The city commissioners for this term were Dr. H. B. Perry, R. L. Clay and C. B. Duncan, a banker, now with the department of justice in Washington.

In 1925 the present mayor, W. H. Gragg, was elected to the mayoralty and in 1937 he was re-elected for the second time. During Mayor Gragg's first administration his commissioners were G. K. Moose, pharmacist; D. L. Wilcox, landryman, and L. T. Tatum, proprietor of a meat market. In 1937, Mr. Moose and Mr. Tatum were re-elected and A. E. Hodges, automobile accessories dealer, succeeded Mr. Wilcox on the board of commissioners.

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